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SECRETARY OF EDUCATION

SUSANA MARTINEZ
GOVERNOR

April 27, 2018

Superintendent Raquel Reedy
6400 Uptown Blvd. NE
Albuquerque, NM 87110

Dear Superintendent Reedy:

Upon review by the New Mexico Public Education Department (NMPED), the district's plan for Whittier Elementary School, which selected *Significantly Restructure and Redesign* for the purposes of transforming the school and dramatically improving student achievement, is conditionally approved.

Whittier Elementary School has earned six consecutive "F" grades. Hundreds of families have entrusted the school with their children's future—and the school has not delivered. Thus, additional safeguards must be put into place so that another generation of students in your district is not underserved.

If the school earns a 7th and 8th "F" grade in the 2017-18 and 2018-19 school years, then the federal grant allocation for 2019-20 and 2020-21 will be withheld and repurposed for School Closure during the 2019-20 school year. If the school earns a combination of "D" and "F" grades over the next three school years, the school shall close at the end of the 2021-22 school year.

Federal funding to support this plan is contingent upon the district fully meeting the conditions outlined below, aligned to the eight overarching areas of focus, by the date indicated:

- 1) **Ensuring that every teacher at the school has a multi-year track record of Highly Effective or Exemplary performance by the beginning of the 2018-19 school year.**
 - By the first day of teacher professional development for the 2018-19 school year, 100% of teachers at Whittier Elementary School will have earned a summative rating of Highly Effective or Exemplary during the 2016-17 school year.

- If a teacher who currently teaches at the school earned a rating of Highly Effective or Exemplary for the 2016-17 school year but then earns a rating of lower than Highly Effective for the 2017-18 school year, the teacher will be placed on the district's Peer Assistance Review (PAR), which is subject to review by NMPED.
 - Any teacher placed on PAR that does not meet the district's identified target of "1 year of growth within each semester for an increase of two grade levels per year for every student who is not on grade level" on page 9 of the APS MRI Response during the 2018-19 school year, the teacher will not be renewed at Whittier Elementary School for the following academic year. NMPED must approve all assessments and methodology utilized to make these decisions, and reserves the right to determine the assessments and methodologies at the state level.
- 2) **Ensuring that the school-based teacher compensation system proposed is designed as a means to recruit, champion, reward, and retain teachers demonstrating substantial impact on student achievement growth. Teacher compensation should be significantly higher at this school than anywhere else in the district, in order to address the students' unequal access to effective education.**
- By May 15, 2018, the district will submit to NMPED for review the formula that will be used to determine the \$1,000 group award for increase in student achievement ("1 year of growth within each semester for an increase of two grade levels per year for every student who is not on grade level"). NMPED must approve all assessments and methodologies utilized to make these decisions, and reserves the right to determine the assessments and methodologies at the state level.
- 3) **Ensuring significantly more instructional time with the school's highest performing teachers, not with outside entities or consultants.**
- By May 15, 2018, the district will submit the finalized schedule for Whittier Elementary School that reflects the increase in instructional minutes/hours indicated in the APS MRI Response:
 - The schedule will include uninterrupted blocks for ELA and math.
 - The schedule will include an extra hour of core content instruction.
 - The schedule will reflect that the Genius Hour is in addition to the extra hour of core content instruction.
 - The schedule will reflect the time protected during the day for meaningful collaboration around data analysis and instructional planning.
- 4) **Ensuring that the selected school principal has a multi-year track record of increasing student performance and is compensated at a higher salary than any other school principal in the district.**
- By June 1, 2019, if students have not demonstrated on average "1 year of growth within each semester for an increase of two grade levels per year for every student who is not on grade level," the principal and the assigned support principal will be removed. NMPED must approve all assessments and methodology utilized to make these decisions, and reserves the right to determine the assessments and methodologies at the state level.

- By June 1, 2020, if students have not demonstrated on average “1 year of growth within each semester for an increase of two grade levels per year for every student who is not on grade level,” the Zone associate superintendent will be removed. NMPED must approve all assessments and methodology utilized to make these decisions, and reserves the right to determine the assessments and methodologies at the state level.
- 5) **Ensuring that curriculum, instruction, and assessment are research-based, vertically aligned, and standards-aligned.**
- *Curriculum:*
 - By the first day of teacher professional development for the 2018-19 school year, the district will provide staff at Whittier Elementary School with a scope and sequence that includes daily lesson objectives; vertical articulation of standards; daily formative assessments; and exemplary student work for ELA and math.
 - By the first day of teacher professional development for the 2019-20 school year, the district will provide staff at Whittier Elementary School with a scope and sequence that includes daily lesson objectives; vertical articulation of standards; daily formative assessments; and exemplar student work for writing and science.
 - *Instruction:*
 - By July 1, 2018, the district will provide a schedule of observation and one-on-one feedback meetings for all teachers to occur biweekly (Driven by Data, pg. 88-90). Teachers must be continuously observed and coached on their instruction.
 - *Assessment:*
 - By May 15, 2018, the district will provide clarification in writing as to which assessments identified on page 36 of the request for application and page 9 of the APS MRI Response will be administered to students, in which content areas, and at which grade levels. NMPED must approve all assessments and methodology utilized to make these decisions, and reserves the right to determine the assessments and methodologies at the state level.
 - By June 1, 2018, the district will provide a schedule of interim assessments to be administered and analyzed no less frequently than every six to eight weeks.
 - By the first day of teacher professional development for the 2018-19 school year, the district will provide staff at Whittier Elementary School with common benchmark assessments to be administered no less frequently than every two to three weeks.
 - By September 1, 2018, the district will ensure that progress monitoring occurs weekly for students well below benchmark and bi-weekly for students below benchmark as measured by the assessments identified on page 9 of the APS MRI Response. NMPED must approve all assessments and methodology utilized to make these decisions, and reserves the right to determine the assessments and methodologies at the state level.
 - *Data-Driven Instruction:*
 - By May 15, 2018, the district will provide an updated school calendar to reflect additional professional days to train teachers on the scope and sequence, assessment strategy, data system, and data analysis protocols and tools.
 - By July 1, 2018, the district will submit for review and approval the protocol for teacher data analysis, the template for teacher action planning, and the protocol for one-on-one teacher-leader data analysis meetings to follow each administration of the benchmark assessment.

- By the first day of school of the 2018-19 school year, the district will provide staff at Whittier Elementary School with a data system that delivers user-friendly reports following benchmark and interim assessments within 48 hours of the administration of the assessment. The reports will include:
 - Item analysis;
 - Standards-level analysis; and
 - Bottom-line results (Driven by Data, pg. 43).

- 6) **Clearly delineating the expected outcomes of any community partnerships, external resources, and national partnerships that the district and school plan to access and coordinate with, as well as a direct connection to the root cause(s) of school underperformance.**

- By June 1, 2018, the district will identify and submit clear metrics for development of the “whole child” (academic, cultural, social emotional, etc.) through the Community Schools model within the categories articulated on page 12 of the APS MRI Response.

- 7) **Revising the budgetary request to not exceed \$100,000 for the planning period and \$675,000 per implementation year for the school via this submission for supplemental funds and denoting all areas where SEG funds, federal funds, grant funds, and all other funding are being utilized to fuel this plan.**

- By May 15, 2018, the district will submit a detailed budget that aligns to Whittier Elementary School’s plan and reflects meeting all conditions outlined in this letter, to indicate funding streams for all budget line items and comprehensive descriptions of each line item. NMPED must approve all budgetary decisions throughout plan implementation.

- 8) **School Performance: Exit Criteria**

- An identified school is expected to exit MRI status. School performance will be evaluated annually and final exit criteria will be provided by June 1, 2018. A draft of the exit criteria is below:
 - Earning more than 50 total points (“C” grade or better) for three consecutive years, which could include the 2017-2018 school year.

Upon acceptance of these conditions by the district, NMPED will commence monitoring of the initial implementation of Whittier Elementary School’s MRI Plan to include all conditions outlined above. Further, the PED will appoint a five-member Educator Advisory Council (EAC) by July 1, 2018 to monitor adherence to the school’s MRI plan, assess the quality of instruction and implementation and provide outside input, counsel, and oversight. The EAC will make recommendations to NMPED (and APS), however NMPED will retain sole decision making authority relating to all compliance and enforcement issues that arise as it pertains to the interpretation, implementation, and enforcement of this plan.

In accepting the above conditions, the district acknowledges that failure to meet one or more conditions may subject them to further review by NMPED, which could result in NMPED selecting another school turnaround option. A determination that such failure constitutes grounds will result in NMPED taking appropriate action. Such action may include, but is not limited to,

suspending the Board of Finance (NMSBA Sections 22-8-39 and 22-2-1) for the district, redirecting Title I funds, suspension of funding, and/or revocation of the conditional approval of the plan which will result in the imminent closure of the school.

The district is required to formally notify NMPED of the acceptance of the above conditions by 5 pm on Friday, May 4, 2018. If the district does not accept all of the above conditions, NMPED will take any and all available and appropriate actions, which may include taking the necessary steps to close the school.

Please note that this letter, alongside the resubmitted application and APS MRI Response, will be posted publicly.

Respectfully,



Christopher N. Ruskowski
Cabinet Secretary, NM Public Education Department

cc: APS Board of Education
Kim Finke, Principal, Whittier Elementary School
Dr. Gabriella Blakey, Associate Superintendent for Leadership and Learning - Zone 1
Debbie Rael, Deputy Secretary of School Transformation, NMPED
Matt Montano, Deputy Secretary of Teaching & Learning, NMPED
Marian Rael, Deputy Secretary of Finance & Operations, NMPED
Ashley Eden, Deputy Chief-of-Staff, NMPED
Elisabeth Peterson, Director of Priority Schools Bureau, NMPED